

Good Evening,

You will see below and [and attached](#) Cymdeithas yr Iaith's official opposition to Cardiff Council's statutory notice of the intention to establish primary school provision to serve the early phases of the Plasdŵr Development.

 [Gwrthwynebiad CYI i hysbysiad statudol ysgol Pl...](#)

Yours sincerely

Mabli Siriol (ADDRESS WITHHELD)

On behalf of the Cardiff Branch of Cymdeithas yr Iaith

Plasdŵr School statutory notice: Cymdeithas yr Iaith's official opposition

1. Cymdeithas yr Iaith is a movement that campaigns for the Welsh language and all of Wales' communities through non-violent means. The Cardiff Branch is the local Cymdeithas branch in the capital city.
2. **We can summarise the main points of our response to the official notice thus:**
 - Cymdeithas yr Iaith opposes Cardiff Council's official notice to open a bilingual two stream school as part of the Plasdŵr development.
 - We base our opposition on concerns regarding the consultation process and statements made by the Council's Cabinet and on educational considerations. These are outlined in turn below.
 - We believe that the new school at Plasdŵr should be a dedicated Welsh medium two form of entry school, not a bilingual school.
 - Furthermore, we believe that all new schools that will be opened as part of the Plasdŵr development should be Welsh medium schools only, in order to ensure that every young person in the community grows up able to speak Welsh.
 - For Cardiff to make its contribution towards the national aim of a million Welsh speakers, the city needs to make a dramatic and rapid increase in the percentage of children in Welsh medium education in the city, therefore it is a Welsh medium school that's needed at Plasdŵr.
3. **Concerns regarding the consultation process and statements made by the Cabinet.**
 - 3.1 In a [tweet](#) during September 2018, the leader of the council said: *"to be clear – Welsh medium schools will be a central part of the Plasdŵr development."* It is therefore not clear to us why the Council's Cabinet decided to consult on a proposal to establish a bilingual school, and break this public promise made by the leader.
 - 3.2 In response to the Council's public consultation on the plan, only 8% of the responses supported the plan to open a bilingual school – 15 responses in total. Cymdeithas yr Iaith presented a petition as part of the consultation response with 876 signatories supporting a dedicated Welsh medium school rather than a bilingual one.
 - 3.3 The Council therefore cannot allege that the public supports the intention to open a bilingual school.

3.4 Therefore the [public statement](#) made by the Cabinet Member for Education and Deputy Leader, Councillor Sarah Merry was false when she said: *“The public consultation gave people the chance to have their say and I’m glad that the majority of responses received were supportive of the proposals for the new school.”*

3.5 Although the majority of respondents supported establishing a new school, the majority weren’t in favour of a bilingual school. This was therefore a misleading and irresponsible statement by the Council’s Deputy Leader that fails to reach the standards that we expect of our elected representatives.

3.6 Furthermore, the report placed before the Cabinet gave a misleading picture of the support for the plan. The [Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee's report](#) on the consultation states:

“The majority of respondents to the consultation were supportive of the proposal with 58% (99) of those that responded favouring the establishment of a new two form of entry primary school to serve parts of the Plasdŵr Development in North-West Cardiff with 9% (15) of those that responded referring specifically to supporting the idea of a two stream school rather than either a Welsh medium or English medium School only.”

However, the second clause of the sentence, referring to the fact that only 15 responses supported establishing a bilingual school, doesn’t appear in [the report presented to Cabinet](#), a report that in almost all other respects is identical content wise to the Committee’s report. This is an omission of a vital piece of information regarding the situation, and it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that the intention here was to mislead and steer the discussion at Cabinet.

3.7 Furthermore, the Council stated in an [evaluation of the response to the consultation](#) in front of the Council’s Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee:

“there’s a considerable risk that a two form of entry, Welsh medium only school, would attract too many children from nearby schools and catchments leading to undersubscription in those schools, making them less secure financially. This in turn could have an effect on the increase in numbers accessing Welsh medium Education in the wider area for an extended period.”

3.8 This theory is unsubstantiated and illogical. Particularly in the context where the school is being established as a result of rapid growth in the local population due to the massive new development, the argument that opening a dedicated Welsh medium school would harm other Welsh medium schools in the area doesn’t hold water. The number of children in the area will grow tremendously – the local Welsh medium schools won’t be competing for the same pupils. The inclination of the majority of people in the area will be to send their children to the closest school whatever the medium. This is a golden opportunity therefore to make Welsh medium education the norm in this new community by opening a dedicated Welsh medium school as the first school, with further new schools to follow also.

3.9 The Council’s behaviour in this matter has been extremely disappointing, and has shown a tendency to mislead and ignore the city’s residents, while undermining Welsh Government’s language policy and the Council’s alleged commitment to expanding Welsh medium education.

4. Educational considerations

4.1 We believe that the new school in Plasdŵr should be a dedicated two form of entry Welsh medium school, not a bilingual school.

4.2 Opening a brand new school for this housing development affords a golden opportunity to quickly increase Welsh medium provision in the area and start to normalise Welsh medium education in the city. By not utilising the financial capital that comes with this huge housing development to open a Welsh medium school, the council would be preventing the growth of Welsh in the area and the wishes of the vast majority of people in the area to restoring Welsh and to see our young people becoming fluent language speakers.

4.3 We don't accept the Council's reasoning regarding the linguistic skills of pupils at the proposed new school. It is only by establishing a dedicated Welsh medium school that the Council will ensure that all pupils would leave the school as fluent Welsh speakers – bilingual schools don't ensure fluency amongst children in the same way. With this proposal, the Council would be at the same time depriving pupils in the English stream of any fluency in Welsh, and would also risk endangering the linguistic environment in the Welsh medium stream.

4.4 In order to reach the national aim of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, it's imperative that county councils increase their Welsh medium education provision now.

4.5 A [statistical analysis](#) commissioned by Cymdeithas yr Iaith has shown that Cardiff must ensure a dramatic and rapid increase in the number of pupils that attend Welsh medium schools, so as to contribute to creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050. The analysis shows how many seven year old children in Cardiff should be receiving Welsh medium education in order to make the contribution that's needed towards the target:

Year	2025	2030	2035	2040
% 7 year old children in WM education	32.8%	43%	56.4%	71.8%

4.6 In 2014, only 15.1% of seven year old children in Cardiff were receiving WM education. It is clear therefore that opening a number of new WM schools, along with improving Welsh at other current schools in Cardiff, is essential in order to reach Cardiff's targets to contribute to the national aim.

4.7 Opening a dedicated WM school as the first school at this huge development would be a tremendous fillip for Welsh in the area and Cardiff as a whole – by establishing a precedent to opening other dedicated WM schools in other new developments and normalising Welsh medium education in all communities – not only in the capital itself, but as an example to be followed by other counties.

4.8 We believe that Welsh is a right for all children in Cardiff, whatever their background. Cardiff Council needs to show ambition and to action this right for every young person in Wales' capital city by opening dedicated WM schools only at Plasdŵr, and across all the city's communities over the years to come.

If you have any questions regarding this response and the matters arising from it, contact post@cymdeithas.cymru.

Cardiff Branch, Cymdeithas yr Iaith

March 2020